

ABSTRACT

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GESTURE OF A DELUGE

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Art

I use plastic materials, light, and heat, to fabricate sculptures and installations of erratic energy. As vehicles for the transfer and exchange of matter and energy in the world, tumultuous phenomena occur naturally or through human agency with infinite degrees of scale. The aftermath brings about a sense of leveling, both in terms of the physical and cultural impact. My investigations of formidable natural and manmade displays of force become characteristics of instability within the confines of the studio. I want to exploit the mildness of controlled space with fixed volatility.

GESTURE OF A DELUGE

By

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Chapter 1: Rogue Moments

My artwork has always been focused on turbulent events. This is rooted in my overall admiration for displays of unpredictability. I have clear memories of being told to gather up my favorite things so that my family could evacuate from encroaching hurricanes. Sitting in a building with hundreds of strangers wondering what was happening outside, I knew that there were forces at work that were uncontrollable. As I grew up I began to chase these same storms for the waves they made, while everyone else in the area was waiting in line to fill their gas tanks and drive as far away as possible.

I moved out of a sleepy beachfront community into an urban inner-city environment. I became acutely aware of the unpredictability of the culture of the city, and the attempts that were made to counter balance chaotic exchanges that were taking place. Whether a neighbors' roof careens off of a house because of an aggressive storm, or a helicopter light punches into my window at midnight, I felt drawn to create artwork rooted in these jarring or convoluted events.



Figure 1.*Rogue* remnants of destroyed tar roof 2011

Chapter 2: Plastic as medium

My primary material for creating these sculptures and installations is clear plastic. The term 'plastic' defines a number of materials, but also describes the action of molding or shaping a formless material. It can be defined as the ability to give form or create especially *within* an art form. My focus is on the characteristics of form and surface that are attainable with this material, and I use it as a skin to hold content. I use the material as a vehicle for information to be depicted.

My utilization of plastic as a material in my sculptures holds a duality of value. The clarity and malleability of material encompasses a visual suspension of disbelief, coaxing the viewer to touch its surface to confirm it is, in fact, physically present. However, it can also be seen as a bastard material in the hierarchy of materials used for the creation of artwork as it has come to permeate the objects that surround us. At this point plastic is an integral part of virtually everything that we use or come in contact with. The prolonged lifespan plastic carries is apparent as it infiltrates our landfills, swings from tree branches, and soaks into the chemical composition of oceans.

Plastic makes a barrier between us and the things we do not want to come into contact with; while at the same time it protects the things we want to keep away from the elements. I do not celebrate plastic as material, but at the same time I cannot ignore its' presence in culture. The Industrial Revolution brought society steel and the means of changing the modern urban landscape forever. Plastic has become another "forever material" to contend with.

The sheets I use are meant for industrial packaging and display applications and are usually formed in controlled environments with vacuum forming tables and electrical heating elements. I do not use any of that. My approach is lo-fi and fairly haphazard. I use propane gas from tanks that would normally be attached to a backyard barbeque. I use a torch head called a “weed burner” that is used for clearing unwanted brush. The propane gas burns without any soot output and leaves the surface of the material clean. In order to reach the desired temperature to make the plastic material malleable, I move the torch across the material back and forth, in and out, so as not to make any one spot completely melt. I think of it as drawing in space with an open flame.

Once the pieces are hot enough I can place them on “bucks” or forms that I make ahead of time that I want to replicate in the clear sheet. I use shapes and forms that are based off of wood skateboard ramps, vintage car frames, or freehand shapes from contour line drawings. I also use steel jigs I have fabricated to lock the sheet into a specific shape and then I heat and push objects or forms into the material to make a warped version. It becomes a three-dimensional drawing by pushing fabricated objects into two-dimensional material. As soon as this material is changed from flat shape into a dimensional form it becomes a vehicle for light.



Figure #2:Frame for a skateboarding bowl ramp

Chapter 3: Light as Phenomena



Figure 3. *Alluvion* plastic, steel, ink, light (detail) 78"x78"x20" 2012

I use light as an integral component for any work I make. Light as phenomena is something that allows things to be seen, and carries a visible temperature with it depending on its source. Things can appear warm or cool without any physical feeling. Light reflects off of surfaces and can also refract in multiple directions. Light can only be seen with some kind of surface to appear on. My manipulation of light has been an aberration from the utilitarian purpose of illuminating things and spaces. I have used it with exorbitant intensity so as to obfuscate the view of things.

My current focus on the use of light is to fill spaces with the reflection of the light and shadow coming off of the plastic forms. The shadow is created in the spaces where the light does not travel. The idea is to engulf an otherwise empty space with the luminescence coming from the forms that are positioned in the space. The space appears to have unclear borders as far as where objects are and are not. This perceived borderless area is where I feel the viewer can experience a concise visual phenomenon without fixating on a particular object. The space takes on tumultuous appearance that echoes the visual characteristics that are normally found in a few fleeting moments. These instances include mirages, explosions, and other phenomena that can be perceived, but are usually experienced from a great distance. My intent is to give the audience a rendition that allows them to experience these instances in a closer proximity. I have begun to compound the interaction between the plastic and light with the introduction of imagery on the surface of the plastic.



Figure #4: *Alluvion* (detail) plastic, steel, ink, light (detail) 78"x78"x20" 2012

Chapter 4: Capturing Volatile Moments



Figure #5: Image of Rock fight in Egypt n.d. January 2010



Figure #6: *Cloud of Rocks* plastic, asphalt, windows (installation view) dim. Variable

2011



Figure #7: *Cloud of Rocks* plastic, asphalt, windows (detail) dim. Variable

2011

The most accessible way that I have been able to witness cursory volatile moments outside of my immediate surroundings is through video and imagery. These representations are accurate in their depictions, but leave something to be desired as far as the scale and proximity. An avalanche or street riot is a casual moment from the perspective of a screen or photo, but this kind of presentation leaves an inevitable distance between the viewer and the event. My appropriation of imagery has been based on physical events that occur in vast landscapes and intense moments from people's actions within these landscapes. A mirage caused by light reacting with a layer of heat near a surface is a definitive visual that exists only at a distance. The idea of a mirage is loaded with connotations that segregate what you see as "inferior" and "superior".



Figure #8: Mirage



Figure #9: *Mirage* Chromed plastic, ink 40"x 20"x 15" 2012

In using imagery of a vast desert landscape or of the surface of the ocean my work considers what is possible with the elements that create an actual mirage. I print images in ink on the surface of clear plastic, and then skew this imagery by applying heat and shape. The combination of warped imagery and light on the surrounding surfaces in

the vicinity makes an amalgamation of visual borders. The piece becomes an erratic portrayal that remains stable upon close inspection. My distortion of this imagery into a form is a coaxing back towards the phenomena that were initially captured by the photography. The capturing of volatile moments through imagery is a means of representing events that are difficult to harness, but there are other residual elements that can be found after these kinds of events take place.

Chapter 5: Deluge

Materials left behind after a turbulent event hold a history of their manipulation. Vocabulary is already in place to delineate ‘what’ these materials are. When a flash flood leaves a house as a pile of wood it is labeled as debris. A bomb ripping through the side door of a van is deemed shrapnel solely based on the fact that it is made from metal. The specificity of what can be found in or after these tumultuous moments is something that I wanted to explore further by creating an installation based on a culmination of detritus suspended in a hovering flood of material and light. In this case, the definition of a deluge that I am using is a great quantity of something arriving at the same time.



Figure #10: Leonardo Da Vinci *Deluge* Drawing black ink with wash on paper
16.2 cm (height) x 20.3 cm (width)

The pieces of detritus that I have collected have no recognizable objects embedded and are only recognizable in their materiality as glass, brick, wood, or other various fragments. The installation of plastic shapes and fragmented materials appear to be flowing out into the space, and at the same time leave room for the viewer to walk underneath its entirety. This installation is meant to have the feeling of a large gestural drawing in a space made specifically to capture it. It is full of all of the various chunks of sporadic material to be viewed in closer proximity. The installation also holds all of the reflection and shadow created from the lighting interacting with the surface of the clear forms. The piece offers the opportunity to engulf the viewer as it hangs above them.



Figure #11: *Deluge* plastic, light, various shards of materials 11'x 11.5'x 8'



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e #12: Detail *Deluge* plastic, light, various shards of materials 11'x 11.5'x 8'



Figure #13 : *Deluge* plastic, light, various shards of materials 11'x 11.5'x 8'



Figure #14: *Deluge* plastic, light, various shards of materials 11'x 11.5'x 8'

Chapter 6: Conclusion

My focus in creating depictions of these erratic moments is a reaction towards unavailability. For me, the planning of concise actions and events is always overturned by unseen anomalies. Instead of attempting to preclude these unpredictable events, I hone in on them.

It is through the dependability of these irregular events that I find myself in awe of the world and the fleeting attempts we make to control it. This body of work is an exercise to seize a few characteristics of the sources it is based upon, and hopefully promote a visceral exchange with those who experience it. I was fortunate to have that moment of exchange when an explosives investigator from the Air Force saw one of my installations. His job was to supervise the detonations of unknown explosives found in the field. He told me that my work “looks like it felt”.